

27 February 2012



N. DJOKOVIC/C. Stebe

6-4, 6-2

An interview with:

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. He gave you a good work out, didn't he?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: No, he definitely played well. I was impressed with his game, especially in the first set. He was hanging in there. I thought I served well when I needed to. He had some break balls.

It could have gone a different way really, because he was returning well. He was very aggressive on the baseline. You could feel that even though he's young and doesn't have much experience playing on the big stage, he really didn't care much. He went on the court wanting to win, and that's the right attitude, I think.

Q. So what's easier, playing a match yourself or sitting on the sidelines watching a younger brother?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I guess playing. (Laughing.) Really, playing, because at least I know what's going on. At least I can control the situations on the court.

But, yeah, it was different for me to sit courtside. Haven't done it really too much. I was happy for my brother to get a wildcard and play in this tournament. I want to take the tournament director and people in the organization of this event for giving us this opportunity and considering him for wildcard.

You know, he tried. Obviously he's not at this level yet, but he's getting in there. I think it's a useful experience for him. He's been struggling a lot with injuries. He had a surgery for the wrist that kept him away for the last year and a half.

In the end, he has to face this, I guess, pressure in a way for having Djokovic surname. All over the world where he plays tennis, I guess

he has to face this pressure that is not necessary for him at this age.

It's his burden, and he's very committed. He wants to succeed in tennis. But everybody obviously has a different path. We have a younger brother who is 16 years old who is coming up, so hopefully they can become world class players.

Q. Did you almost coach him today?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I didn't do it on the court because I will get fined for that obviously, which would be funny to get fined for coaching.

But I did talk to him a lot. You know, obviously he's my brother, younger brother, and I try to advise him on everything in the life, and especially around tennis, to make his life a little bit easier and to give him certain directions in which he can take, which he can go to.

But yet again, I have to say it's hard because the people compare him to me. In all his junior tournaments and all these years that he's been playing tennis he's been compared to me when I was that age. It's absolutely different.

So he's trying to fight I think with his mind more than really with the game. So I think as soon as he manages to control his thoughts and, you know, focus on his own career, I think he's going to be good. He has potential obviously, and it's in the blood.

Q. Says he can beat you at PlayStation.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: We'll see tonight. (Smiling.)

Q. Has he asked your advice on girls as well?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: For that I have to ask him. Trust me, I have to ask him for that. So let's keep it to that. (Laughter.)

Q. A little bit of rust today in the first set? You have not played for a couple weeks.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, but to be honest, I was really happy throughout the whole match the way I played. I really didn't have much downs in the game. He made me play it. You know, he gave me good rhythm and went for his shots and made a lot of winners. Credit to him.

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But from my side, I think I was not making a lot of unforced errors and really serving well when I needed to. So I'm happy with the first match after four weeks definitely.

Q. When you look at what you achieved last year, Novak, do you ever think to yourself sometimes, It's not going to be until early June that I can do anything better than I did last year?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, you know, people talk about that obviously, and I'm expecting that. But to be honest, I'm not really comparing 2012 with 2011. I'm not comparing any year with another year, because I think year is different.

I want to have this positive mindset on the court that is going to kind of keep me away from unnecessary pressure that I already have as No. 1 in the world and as a top player, somebody that's expected to win in most of the matches.

The last year was amazing. Definitely best year of my career. If you ask me if I can repeat it, I don't know. It's going to be very, very hard obviously.

But I'm trying to go for the trophy like everyone else. I try to be hunting for the trophy, not the hunted one. I'm not trying to defend. So I think this is the right mindset.

When I'm stepping on the court, I want to be playing my game and going for the shots. I think I been handling it quite well for now.

Q. When you've come to though sort of mindset, did you consult with a psychologist or just the people around you?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I don't have a psychologist; I never did. But I have the people around me that I trust and that I talk to a lot.

Luckily for me, those people really love me and want me to do well. They always try to, you know, give me something to think about. I always seek for improvement, for perfection, as I think everybody else, and I rely on their advice.

Q. At the beginning of the year you met Diego Maradona in Abu Dhabi. Do you have any contact with him?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yes.

Q. You plan to meet him here?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yes, I'm planning. Obviously his scheduling has to be right. Hopefully he can come maybe even tomorrow.

Q. Have you called him or has he called you?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Not for now, no. Actually I'm going to give him a call tomorrow. Let's see. He usually has practices in the evening with the team.

It was quite an amazing experience. We played some tennis, football, some tennis, some football as well. We beat my brother and his coach easy. (Smiling.)

Well, of course I had a big advantage playing with the best ever football player.

Q. Do you feel when you come onto the court these days there is a completely different buzz about it compared with 12 months ago? If you do feel that, do you like it?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Of course I like it. Of course I enjoy my new position and everything I have achieved so far in my career, especially in the last year and a half. I mean, I'm proud of all the results, and I know that the results are there for a reason.

I been working really hard. I know since I was four years old I been dedicated to this sport, as most of top players that been playing this sport forever, always seeking to be the best in what we do.

It's really nice stepping out on the court and seeing a full stadium and having a lot of support. I'm very flattered.

Q. You talk about the expectancy and hype around Marko, but there is also quite a lot hype being made about your younger brother, Djordje.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah.

Q. Is it even harder upon him at his tender age, four years younger than Marko, to live up to the expectations? And how is his career progressing?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: That's what I talked about just now. They haven't matured. They had to face that kind of pressure now even more, but that kind of pressure already five years ago when I became a top-10 player. Obviously they got more attention back in Serbia because they spend most of the time there.

You know, five years ago Marko was only 15, 16; Djordje was 10. At that age you're not still matured mentally. You have to face that and you have to see five to ten people watching your practices and you're wondering what for, you know.

So it is something that they're carrying on their backs. But, look, everybody has a different life. Everybody has a different way.

You just have to try to find a way to cope with that.

They're doing better. You know, obviously Djordje now got used to it a little bit more. They are spending a little bit maybe more time now outside of Serbia, which gives them maybe a little bit more freedom to improve.

So let's see what happens.

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